

REMARKS

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the claim rejections set forth in the Office Action dated January 24, 2007.

Summary

Claims 6, 21, and 23 are currently amended.

Claims 25 – 30 were withdrawn by the Examiner in the previous Office Action.

Claims 31 - 33 were added.

Claims 6 – 9, 21 – 24, and 31 – 34 are currently pending.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph

Claims 6 – 9, 21, 22, and 24 were rejected pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Applicant has amended claims 6, 21, and 22 to obviate the claim rejections pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. More specifically, the Applicant has amended claims 6, 21, and 22 to more clearly describe, for example, the openings of the support member and the spaces of the steering wheel.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 6 – 9, 21, 22, and 24 were rejected pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Agetsuma (U.S. Pub. No. 2002/0066658) in view of Miyako et al. (U.S. Pub. No. 2002/0033321).

Claim 6 recites, *inter alia*, a second opening formed on an upper portion of the support member so as to form an opening through which the manipulating knob is projected from the support member.

Agetsuma fails to disclose or suggest a second opening formed on an upper portion of the support member so as to form an opening through which the manipulating knob is projected from the support member. Agetsuma discloses that "[t]he support

member is fixedly secured to a rear surface of a pad of the steering wheel" (abstract; Figure 1 and 2). In other words, "a portion of each vehicle-mounting steering switch 3 is protruded into the inside of one space 2 from the rear surface of the pad 1c (paragraph [0027]). An opening is not needed or taught because the steering switch 3 is attached behind the pad 1c.

Miyako et al. fail to disclose or suggest a second opening formed on an upper portion of the support member so as to form an opening through which the manipulating knob is projected from the support member. Miyako et al. teach a contrary arrangement. Miyako et al. teach, as shown in Fig. 1, that the top portion of the casing 4 is completely enclosed and is in connection with the top portion of the lower cover 12.

The cited references fail to disclose or suggest, either alone or in combination, a second opening formed on an upper portion of the support member so as to form an opening through which the manipulating knob is projected from the support member. Accordingly, claim 6 is allowable over the cited references.

Claim 6 is also allowable over the cited references for additional reasons that are independent of those discussed above. Claim 6 is allowable because there is no motivation or suggestion to combine the teachings of Miyako et al. and Agetsuma. The proposed modification renders the teachings of Agetsuma unsatisfactory for its intended purpose. Agetsuma teaches "a manipulating knob which is rotatably and pivotally supported on the support member" (paragraph [0010]). "The manipulating knob 6 is rotatably and pivotally supported on the support member 4 by means of a connecting pin 5" (paragraph [0028]). The pad 1c "substantially covers the whole of the spokes 1b" (paragraph [0027]). The manipulating knob 6 is pivotally connected to the pad 1c using a pin 5. "[A]s shown in FIG. 5C, the manipulating knob 6 is rotated in one direction about the connecting pin 5" (paragraph [0034]). The Examiner suggests combining the teachings of Agetsuma with the teachings of Miyako et al., which teach that "a switch is mounted in one of the spokes 1c" (paragraph [0018]). One skilled in the art would understand that mounting the manipulating knob 6 of Agetsuma in one of the spokes

would render the teachings of Agetsuma unsatisfactory for its intended purpose. The spoke disposed in the manipulating knob 6 would not allow the manipulating knob 6 to rotate as intended. In other words, the spoke would completely negate the rotational movement provided by the connecting pin 5. Therefore, claim 6 is allowable over the cited references because there is no motivation or suggestion to combine the teachings.

Dependent claims 7 – 9 and 21 – 24 depend from allowable claim 6, so are allowable for at least this reason. Further limitations of the dependent claims are allowable over the cited references. For example, the cited references fail to teach the spoke includes an upper spoke and a lower spoke that extend through the support member as recited in claim 21. In contrast, as interpreted by the Examiner and shown on page 6 of the Office Action dated January 24, 2007, Miyako et al. teach a “lower spoke” that does not extend through the support member. As discussed above, the spokes in the teachings of Agetsuma do not extend through the support member.

Claim 22 recites, *inter alia*, an upper space and lower space. The cited references fail to disclose an upper space and lower space.

New Claims

Claims 31 – 33 were added. Claims 31 – 33 find support in the application as originally filed. No new matter was added. Claim 31 is allowable because the cited references, either alone or in combination, fail to teach each and every feature.

Claim 31 recites, *inter alia*, a manipulating knob that is rotatable in a direction that is perpendicular to the spoke. Miyako et al. does not teach a manipulating knob. Agetsuma teach a contrary arrangement. Agetsuma teach “[t]he manipulating knob 6 is rotatably and pivotally supported on the support member 4 by means of a connecting pin 5” (paragraph [0028]). Therefore, the manipulating knob 6 in the teachings of Agetsuma is rotatable in a direction that is parallel to the spoke 1b.

Claim 31 recites, *inter alia*, the manipulating knob protrudes from an opening in the top of the support member and the opening being at least partially surrounded by the front-side and back-side casing members. As discussed above, the cited references fail to teach an opening in the top of the support member.

Dependent claims 32 – 33 depend from allowable claim 31, so are allowable for at least this reason. Further limitations of the dependent claims are allowable over the cited references. For example, the cited references fail to disclose or suggest upper spoke and a lower spoke that extend through the support member as recited in claim 32. The cited references also fail to disclose or suggest the upper spoke extends through the upper space and the lower spoke extends through the lower space.

CONCLUSION

For at least the reasons presented above, the Applicant respectfully submits that claims Claims 6 – 9, 21 – 24, and 31 – 34 are in condition for allowance.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned in the event that a telephone interview would expedite consideration of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

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